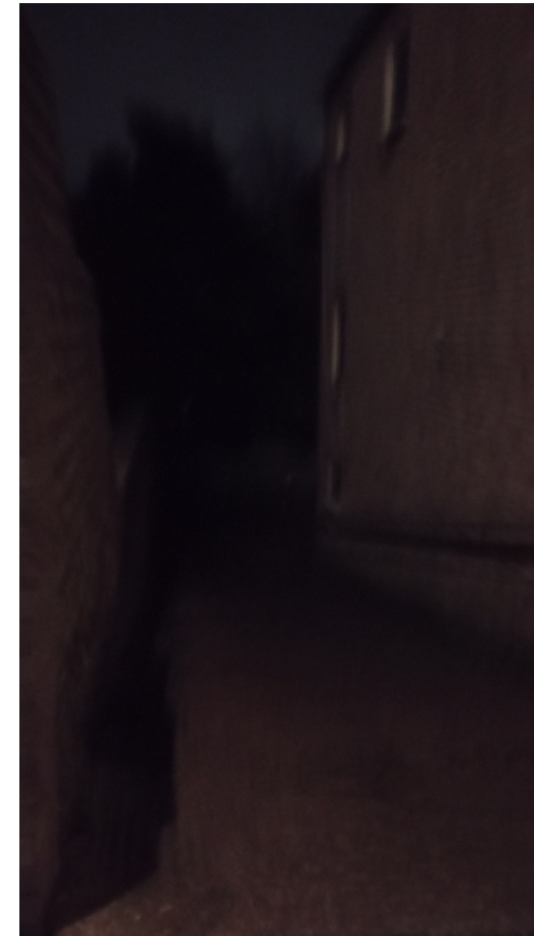




## Caro Crescit

To my beautiful family and friends, this tale is yours- J.H.

For Marie- R.D.







Something was in the room with me, staring  
at me. I reached over and took a match,  
striking it against the bedpost.





He cracked his knuckles.

I don't think I'll ever forget  
the sound of him doing that.



When I finally saw him he was longer than Jared had been, and stood at a strange angle, as though his legs were too stiff to use.



It bulged slightly when he moved, hard bumps forming and stretching his skin in odd places.

























You just need to – reach down inside and – really  
feel that fear. Let it guide how you grow. You'll  
feel it in your –

[HE STOPS, SNICKERS.]

JARED

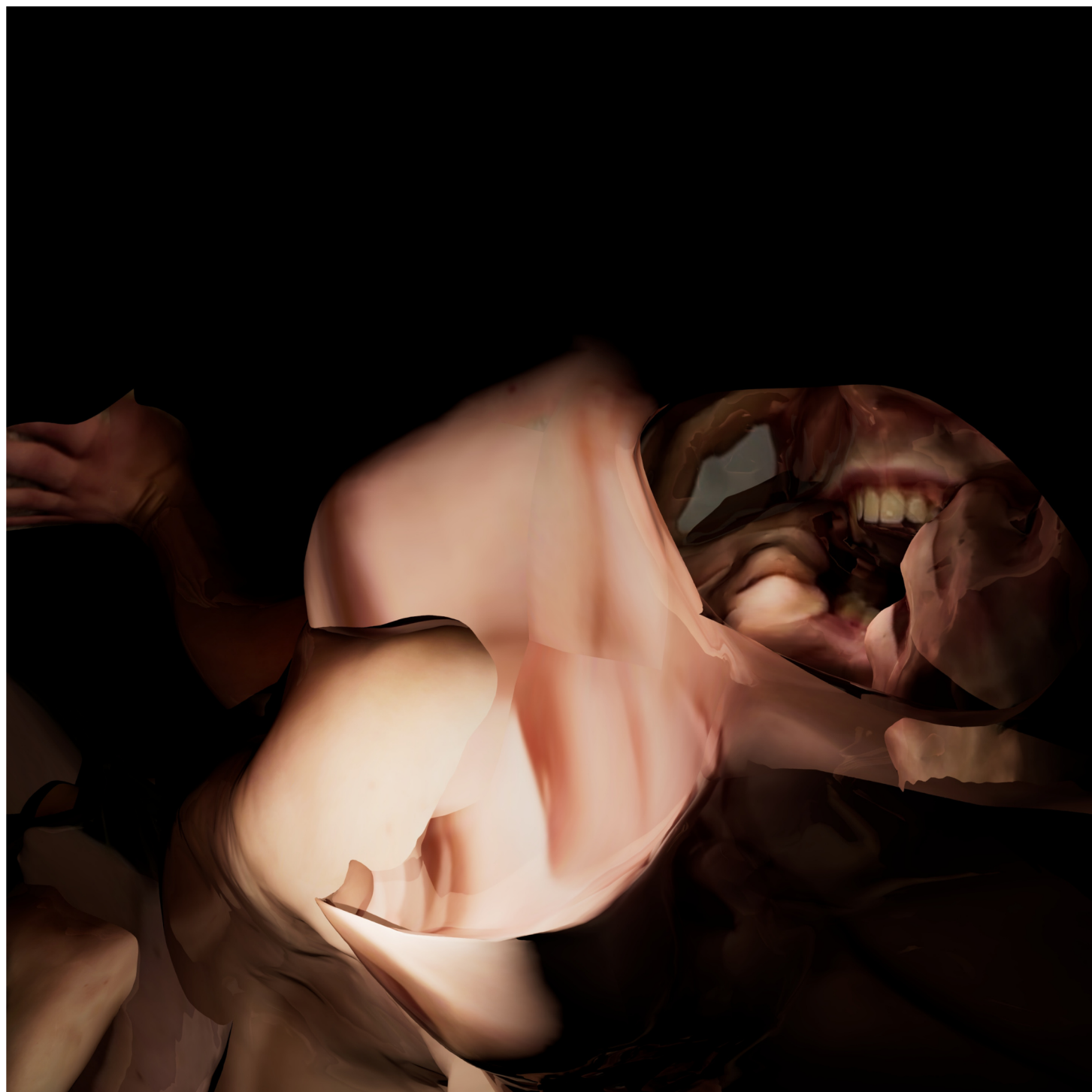
Bones.











J was there, standing his full height.  
A distended, jagged body bared in  
all its twisted grandeur.









I believe a vampire to be more like an animal than a man. That is not to be taken as merely a turn of phrase, but more to do with how they work. I do not believe vampires are human in anything more than their appearance.

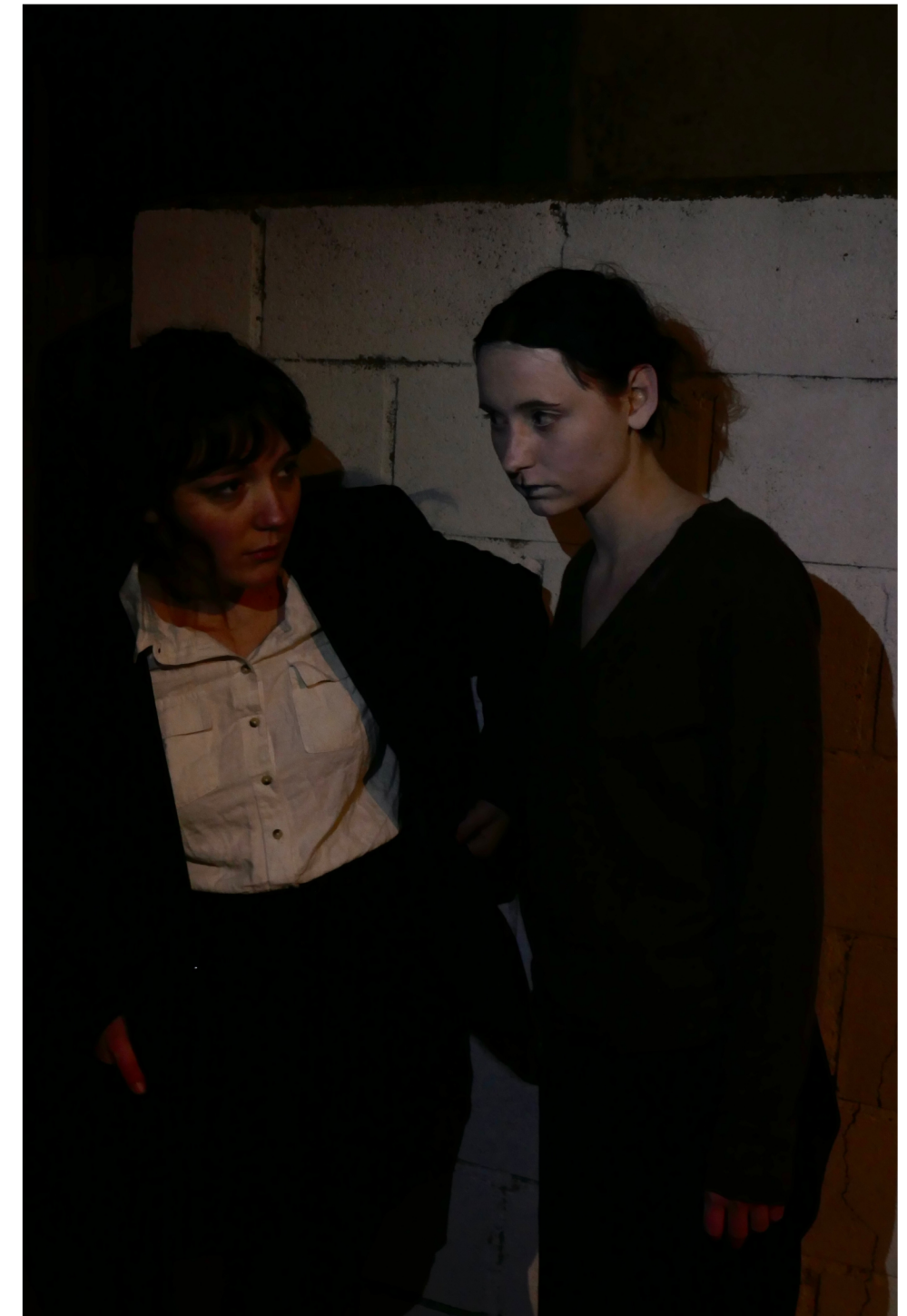
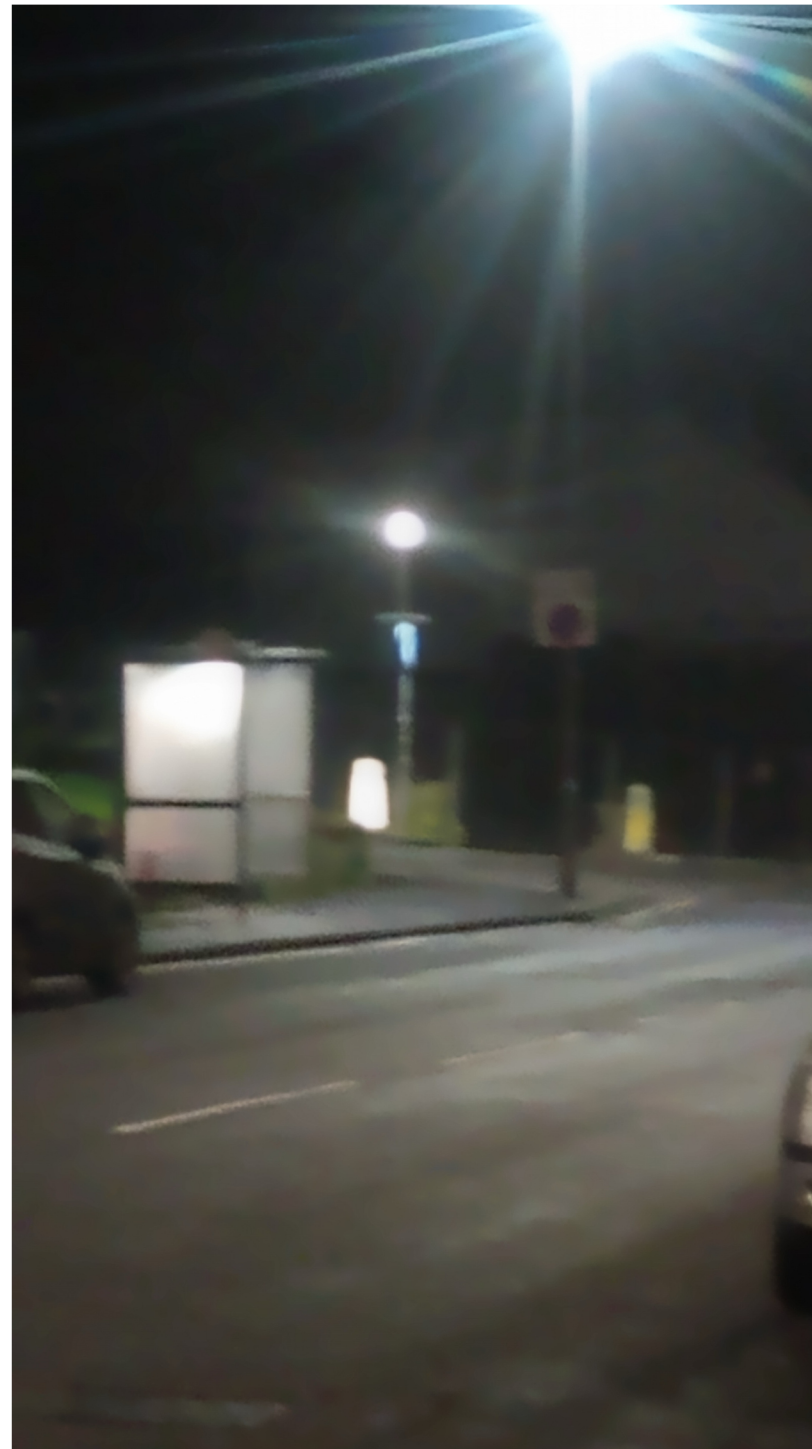








One thing that should be noted is that they do not speak. In fact, they are in my experience totally silent, having no need for air and no room in their throats for a windpipe.



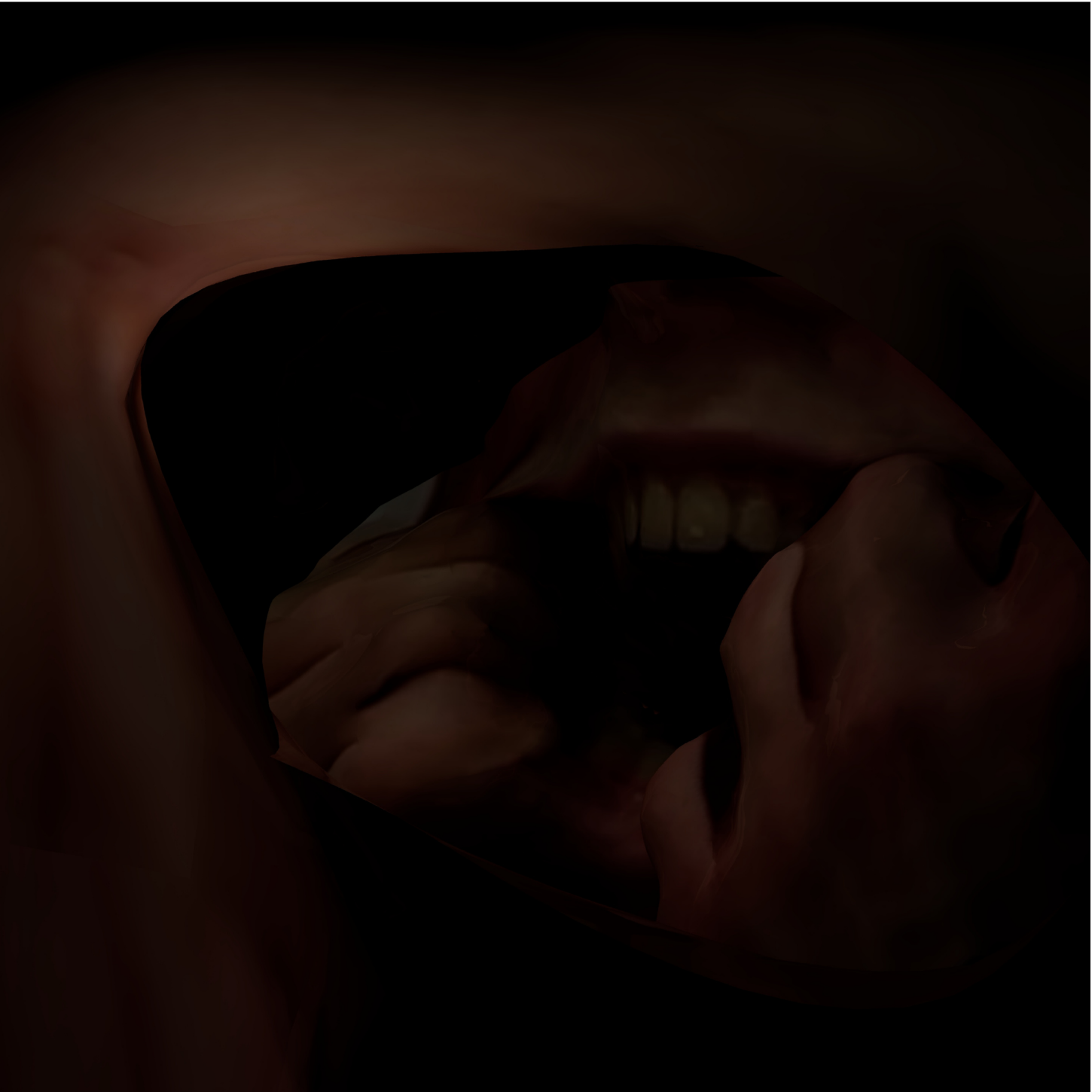
They are able to make themselves understood, however, with absolute clarity, though the manner through which they do so has never been clear to me.



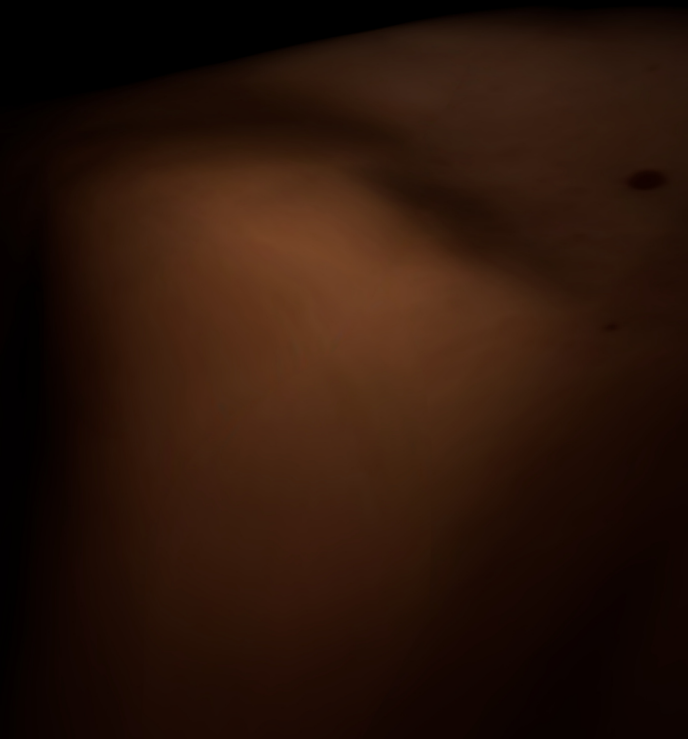


I do not recall the fact that it never said  
a word as striking either of us as strange  
in the slightest.









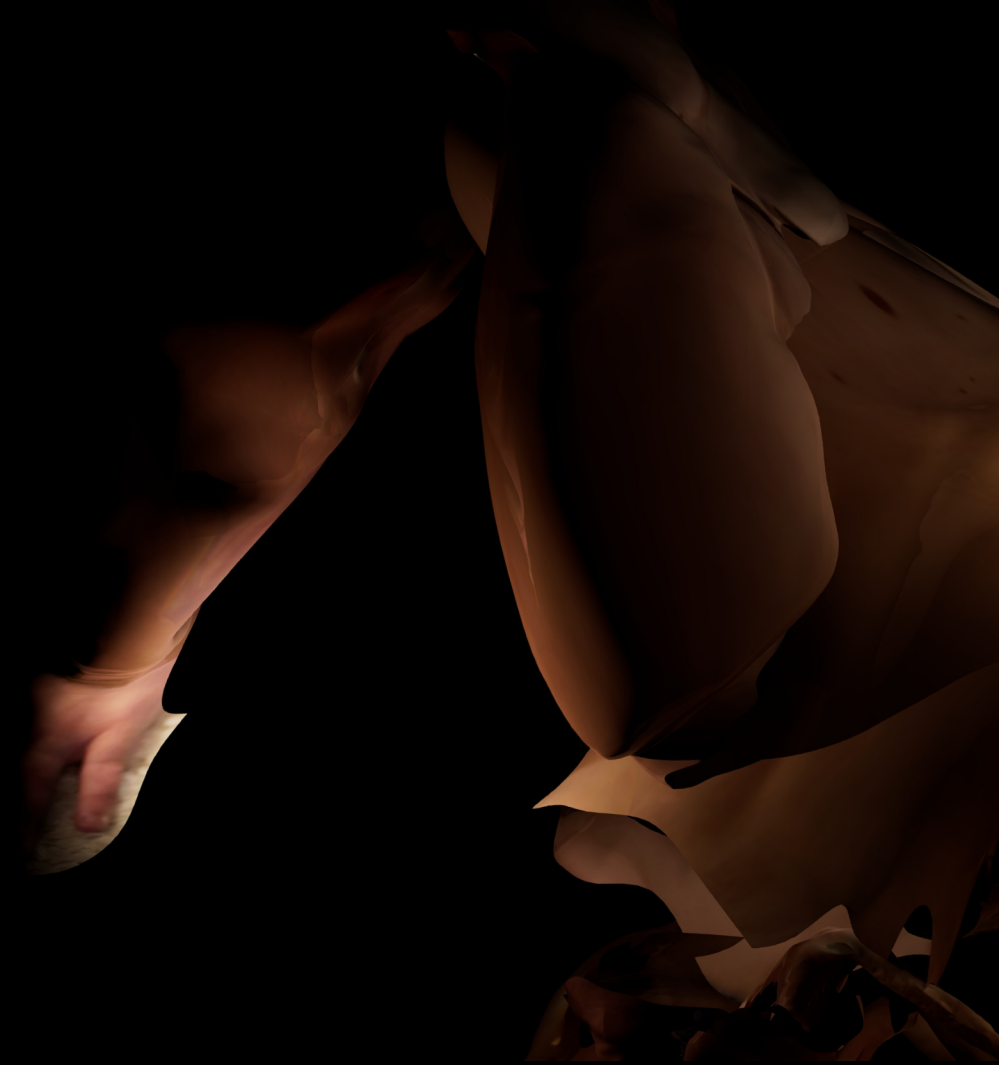
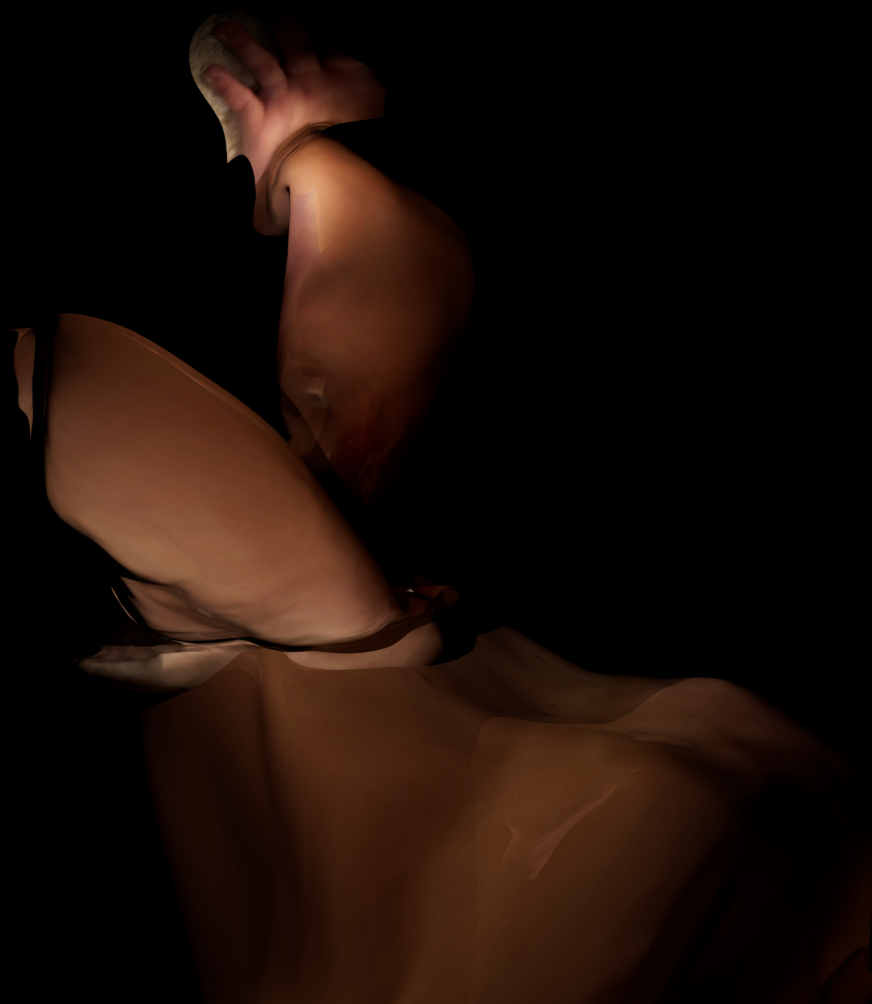
It was not Marie, swinging round and about on the bars.



Marie had legs.



Marie only had two arms.

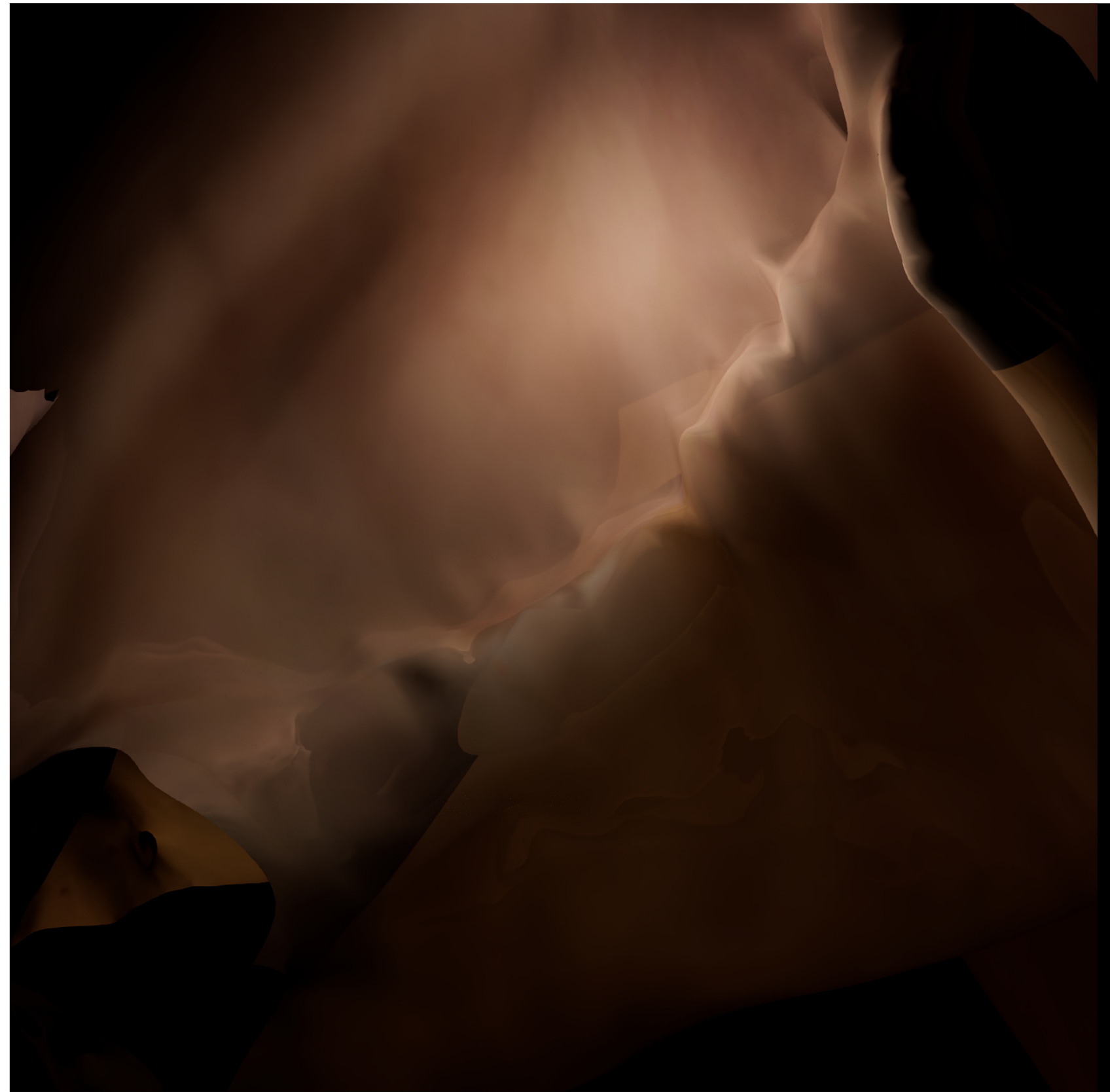


And Marie had a head.

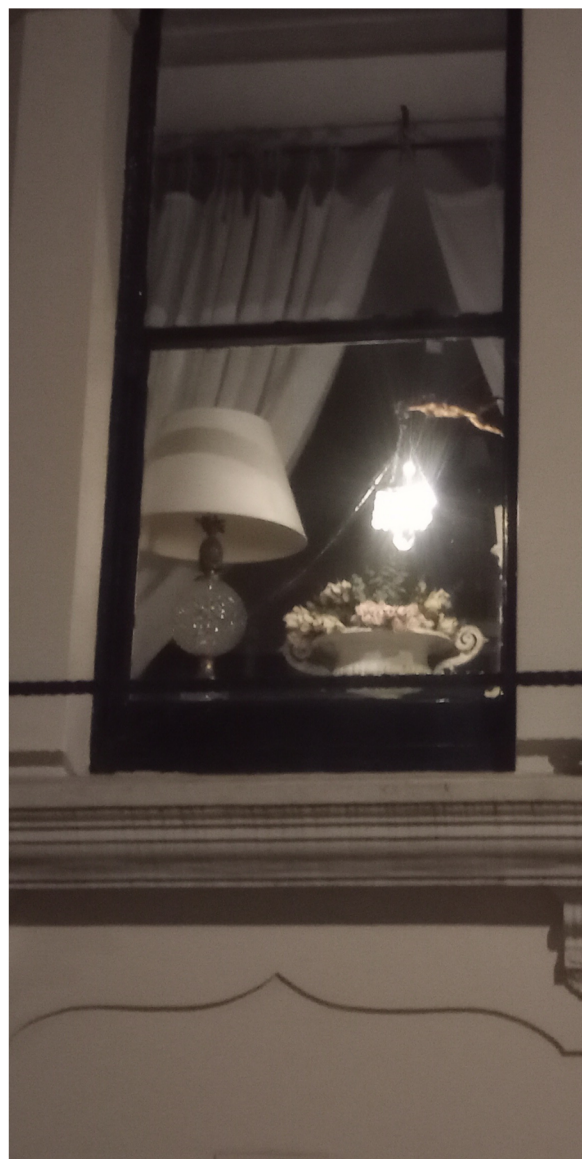




The thing that swung and flipped and twirled around the bars  
was nothing like Marie, though its flesh looked human enough.







It did have a smile, though.



Stitched... right in the centre  
of its torso.















When he gestured for the book, an almost featureless black hardback, with a title on the front in a faded, white serif font, I saw that his fingers looked... sharp, as though the skin at the ends were being pushed into a tight point by something inside.

Red dripped and pulsed from the cart, soaking the pages and forming a small pool around it. The books were bleeding.



“thank you for teaching us the insides”



